

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), the only congressional member from Southern California on the House Committee on Ways and Means, today introduced the Medicare Drug Formulary Protection Act, sensible legislation that would create parity between Medicare beneficiaries and Medicare prescription drug plans.

“This is a bill that does right by Medicare’s beneficiaries who deserve to receive the drugs for which they signed up,” Rep. Becerra said.

Under current law, prescription drug plans can change their drug formulary (the list of drugs that an individual plan offers) as many times as they want. The formulary is the critical reason, coupled with cost, why seniors choose a particular plan. Seniors, however, are prohibited from changing drug plans except during the annual open enrollment period. This leaves no guarantee that the drug they need will be covered all year.

“This is certainly an inequity that can and should be easily fixed,” Rep. Becerra said.

Under the Medicare Drug Formulary Protection Act, Medicare prescription drug plans would be prohibited from removing a drug from their formulary until the beginning of each calendar year. If a prescription drug plan wishes to change its formulary, it can do so at the end of the year during the open enrollment period. The plan must notify its enrollees of the formulary changes

so seniors can then decide whether to stick with that plan or switch to a different one. The bill also ensures that a drug like Vioxx can be removed expeditiously if it is shown to be harmful.

Rep. Becerra's legislation is the House companion to S.2255, a bipartisan bill written and introduced in February by Senator Dianne Feinstein (CA).

"I applaud and thank Senator Feinstein for recognizing this glaring inequity in the Medicare prescription drug program and then having the wherewithal to write legislation to fix it," Rep. Becerra said. "I look forward to working with her to see that this simple, straightforward fix becomes reality."

Fifty-one of Rep. Becerra's colleagues in the House of Representatives joined him as original co-sponsors to his bill. Those members include:

Peter DeFazio

Maurice Hinchey

Jan Schakowsky

John Salazar

Sherrod Brown

Grace Napolitano

Mike Honda

Silvestre Reyes

Tim Ryan

William Jefferson

C.A.	"Dutch" Ruppertsberger
------	------------------------

Mike Doyle

Patrick Kennedy

John Larson

Earl Pomeroy

Rick Boucher

Michael McNulty

Bobby Scott

Robert Wexler

Doris Matsui

Joe Baca

Dennis Cardoza

Jerry Costello

Bernie Sanders

James P. McGovern

REP. BECERRA INTRODUCES SENSIBLE FIX TO MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROGRAM

Tuesday, 04 April 2006 19:00

Carolyn Maloney

Elijah Cummings

Alan B. Mollohan

Jim Marshall

James Oberstar

Gene Green

Sander Levin

Donald Payne

Raul Grijalva

Eleanor Holmes Norton

Charlie Gonzalez

Charlie Rangel

Jay Inslee

Rahm Emanuel

Pete Stark

Stephen Lynch

Tom Lantos

John Conyers

William Delahunt

Lloyd Doggett

Jim McDermott

Major Owens

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Stephanie Herseth

Solomon Ortiz

Robert Brady

To read the bill language of the Medicare Drug Formulary Protection Act, please [click here](#). To read the summary of the bill, please [click here](#)

.

Becerra.House.gov